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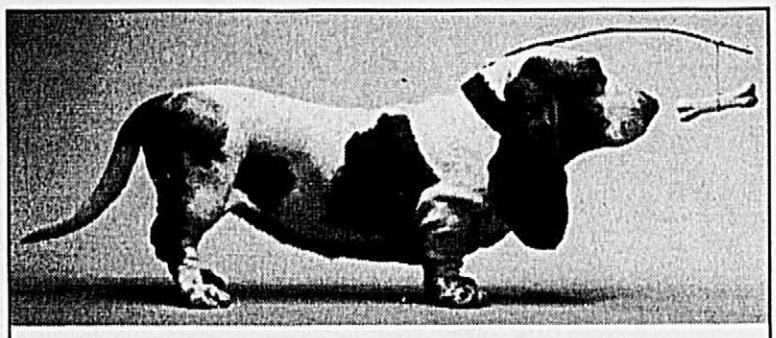

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CUBA'S GAY CABARET DEFIES THE PARTY

Queer night life survives under Castro

by Phil Gunson

The Guardian

HAVANA, Cuba. By day it's just another anonymous house in the decaying back streets of old Havana. But as night falls the two-story building is transformed, performers don makeup, wigs and false eyelashes, for a clandestine gay cabaret.

It's enough to make the hair of a Communist Party militant stand on end.

Until recently, both the participants and the audience would have been jailed for what goes on here. Their homosexuality alone could earn them a three-month sentence for "public scandal", not to mention a beating and possible rape by police. For four years the government has been permitting some self-employment, but drag artists and cabaret impresarios are predictably not among the approved occupations.

"These shows are really on the edge," said Lorenzo, the gay man who has been running this cabaret for the past two years. "The police can knock the door down at any moment and arrest everyone here. They fine the householder 1,500 pesos [about seven months' wages] and confiscate the lights and sound system."

So far, Lorenzo's show has survived, partly because he has a good relationship with the neighbors, who regularly receive free performances, and partly because the authorities have eased up on the repressive mandates of their predecessors.

After the 1959 Cuban revolution, homosexuals were labeled social and ideological deviants. Many lost their jobs and some were sent to labor camps, while thousands fled the country.

But around 1990 things began to change. In 1992 President Fidel Castro declared that homosexuality was "...a natural human tendency that must simply be respected."

"There is more tolerance now," said Vera Bensmann of Medecins sans Frontieres, who is working on a government-approved program for AIDS education and prevention.

Strawberry and Chocolate, a recent film about a gay intellectual who falls in love with a straight party militant, also broke new ground with its sympathetic portrayal of homosexuality, mentions Vera. "But there is still no *social* acceptance."

"The only real change," said Lorenzo, who claims to have been beaten and narrowly escaped a nine-month prison sentence, "is that instead of sending you to jail these days, they just fine you."

Like his partner Vladimir, who nightly slips into a shiny, tight-fitting dress, falsies and a curly blonde wig for his performance as "Camilla," Lorenzo is HIV-positive. They created the cabaret when both lost their jobs because of their medical condition.

They understandably asked for their real names and other identifying details to be kept secret. "If we're identified, they'll shut us down for good," Lorenzo said.

Until recently it was obligatory for those testing HIV-positive to check into sanitariums, described by one former patient as "a kind of concentration camp." Lorenzo attests that there's still heavy pressure to do so, despite a new policy of "open door" treatment.

Patients in the community have limited access to drugs, and although in theory they are guaranteed a special diet, the food doesn't always arrive.

Like Lorenzo and Vladimir, ever-larger numbers of gays are coming out, not only in Havana but across the country, despite the lack of officially sanctioned organizations. From regular gay volleyball matches on the beach to group sex in secluded parks, the limits of official tolerance are constantly being tested.

Occasionally, there's a backlash. In September police closed down El Periquiton, a large, illegal gay disco in the capital.

"Any hint of drugs and they'll close us down in a flash," said Lorenzo.

The gay scene in Cuba has never been overtly political, and queer issues are unlikely to have been uppermost in the Pope's mind when, on his recent visit, he spoke of freeing the oppressed. But the work of Vladimir, Lorenzo, their performers and audience, constitutes one more crack in the once monolithic Cuban revolution.

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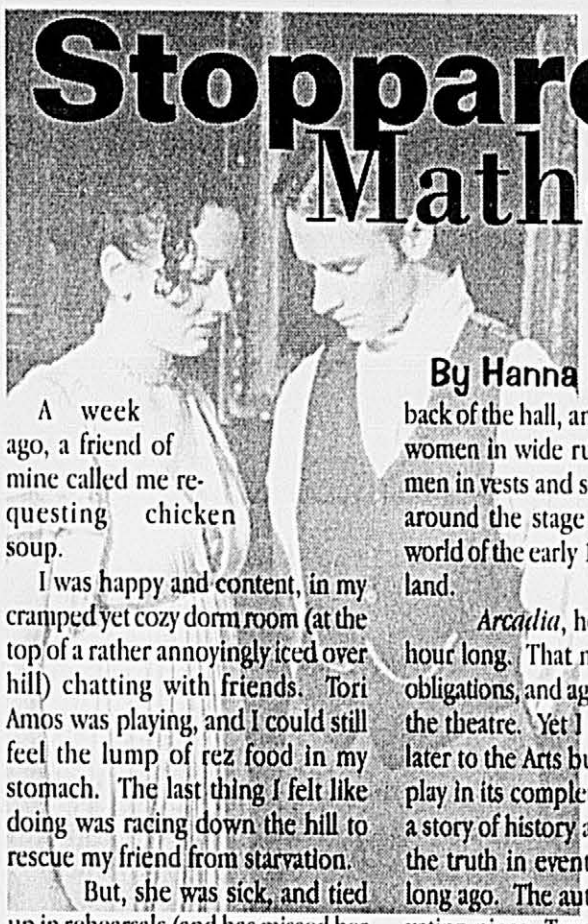
Letter to the editor

In response to the Jeff Webber article, "Fighting for the Man" Monday, Feb 16 1998

After reading "Fighting for the Man", I was sorrowly *(sic)* disappointed that Jeff Webber was so quick to please the status quo. The language from the beginning of the article reveals a pre-determined point of view and a subjectivity quite detrimental to legitimate journalism. The end of the article states that the Promise Keepers "is a war against women, ethnic minorities, religious minorities, the queer community, and pluralistic democracy in its totality." One who believes this simply reveals that they are content with quite superficial investigation. Jeff Webber, unbeknownst to him, quotes in bold red Tony Evans, an African-american preacher and a prominent figure in Promise Keepers. Accusing this movement of being "homophobic" just goes to show how wide of an application this word now has. Is to have a moral belief system that disagrees with homosexualtiy imply tactics of discrimination *(sic)*? This wave of thought demands from all heterosexuals a conflict-free reaction to a moral stance they may or may not agree with. A stance that no longer considers, or at least is now willing to undermine the legitimacy of its moral fabric in order to be free of conflict with a community that has disavowed one of its tenants *(sic)*. The word application of "homophobic" that Jeff Webber has used, impedes on the freedom of belief that every human being has. It does not allow one to disagree on this particular moral stance. Stating that Promise Keepers is a war against women is once again oh so short sighted. Promise Keepers is a war against the loss of male identity in all its forms. How can one say that this group wages war against women when they preach leadership of the family through loving service, instead of drunkeness, abuse, abscence *(sic)*, unfaithfulness and all other behaviours that are distroying the family? A movement this big is bound to be infiltrated by bad elements, but to discard it so superficially is unfortunate. They have taken a religious, moral, social and political stance in the name of Jesus Christ in order to wage war not against women, minorities or homosexuals, but to respond to a profound and unanswered problem in society, that of affirming the male identity that finds itself disillusioned and hurt in a world that provides no answers. They have the freedom to believe that Jesus Christ is their Saviour and the answer to their lost male identity as well as their sinful nature. Attacking them is just showing that one is afraid of any group whose belief system includes an independant and sovereign morality, or in this case one could say "Christophobic". In any case, the word "phobic" attached to any other identity must be semantically reexamined so that it does not infringe anymore on every person's right to individuality and belonging to a collectivity of the same confession.

- by Paul Samuel Cornett
U2 Arts



Stoppard's Mathematical Composition

Review of *Arcadia*

By Hanna Rabinovich

A week ago, a friend of mine called me requesting chicken soup.

I was happy and content, in my cramped yet cozy dorm room (at the top of a rather annoyingly iced over hill) chatting with friends. Tori Amos was playing, and I could still feel the lump of rez food in my stomach. The last thing I felt like doing was racing down the hill to rescue my friend from starvation.

But, she was sick, and tied up in rehearsals (and has missed her calling as a professional beggar), so I dragged myself down to Moyse Hall in the Arts building. I pushed open the towering wooden doors of the theatre with one hand, in the other a plastic McGill bookstore bag holding a bowl, a spoon, a can opener, and a can of Jewish penicillin. I didn't leave Moyse Hall until an hour later.

After ten minutes of sound and light cue practices, the dress rehearsal of *Arcadia* finally commenced. I sat it a chair toward the back of the hall, and watched while women in wide ruffled gowns and men in vests and scarves sauntered around the stage in a dream like world of the early 19th century England.

Arcadia, however, is not an hour long. That night, I had other obligations, and against my will I left the theatre. Yet I returned a week later to the Arts building to see the play in its completion. *Arcadia* is a story of history and trying to find the truth in events that happened long ago. The author of this captivating piece, Tom Stoppard, loads the play with so much historical and mathematical data, you wonder why *Arcadia* is a play and not a textbook. Indeed, while watching the performance unfold before me, I sincerely wished to read the play, so that I could refer back and say "Oh yes! Now I remember..."

In addition to a good memory, an audience member should also come prepared with a little bit of background information. It wouldn't hurt to be familiar with Lord Byron and Regency England, as well as a basic knowledge of chaos theories and Greek history. At least, enough history to know that Arcadia was a rural area in Greece that clung, during the classical age, to the old pastoral ways while the rest of the nation progressed.

This theme of time progression is mirrored throughout the play as we follow the Croom family in the year 1809, as well as their counterparts in the present time. Historical researchers on the grounds of Sidley Park, home to the Coverly family, spend the play trying to solve the mystery of past events. *Arcadia* actually begins in the present, but quickly lapses into the past, the actual events in question. We watch Thomasina, played beautifully by Lisa Bird receiving lessons in Latin, philosophy and mathematics from her diligent tutor Septimus Hodge (Philip Pace). Bird and Pace share throughout the play a progression of amusing dynamics— frustrations of all kinds arise, and the two actors express their thoughts and emotions clearly, assisting the audience in understanding the complicated script.

Time had no relevance in Arcadia, nor does it affect Sidley Park, where quickly jumps forward 180 years, where we meet the descendants of the Coverlys, and Hannah, an eager and curious historian/author, played by Anne-Catherine Lebeau. Lebeau's performance is captivating, and her interactions on-stage range from adolescently amusing to the intellectually engaging.

The cast creates as a whole is a tight ensemble, essential for a play of this cerebral weight. With nineteen actors, it is a the cast gave a performance of considerable grace. The lighting and music compliment the moods of the scene. As the chaotic nature of the play escalates toward the end, and the characters of the present get closer and closer to the truth of 1809, the volume of the background music hits strong intensities and turns to rousing symphonies at key points throughout *Arcadia*.

The past is well represented by exquisite period costumes, designed by Catherine Bradley, and luxurious wooden furniture— even pen and ink is accounted for in the productions and Stoppard's meticulous respect for authenticity. Director Alexandre Marine pays heed to the time shifting in the play, and stages deft transitions from one time to the next. At the beginning of the play, characters from the two periods rarely share stage time; as one set walks off the stage, the other walks on, smoothing over the multitude of years. Interestingly enough, as the performance continues, the time periods merge more and more— time becomes more irrelevant — until ultimately the characters from the two periods are on stage together, and eventually seem to transcending time and converse.

This ingenious directing, along with the brilliant combination of lighting, music, costumes, and acting take the possibly overbearing script. To paraphrase Thomasina, from now on, I will always see fractals in my chicken soup.

Arcadia *is playing in Moyse Hall, in the Arts building, until the 21st of February.*

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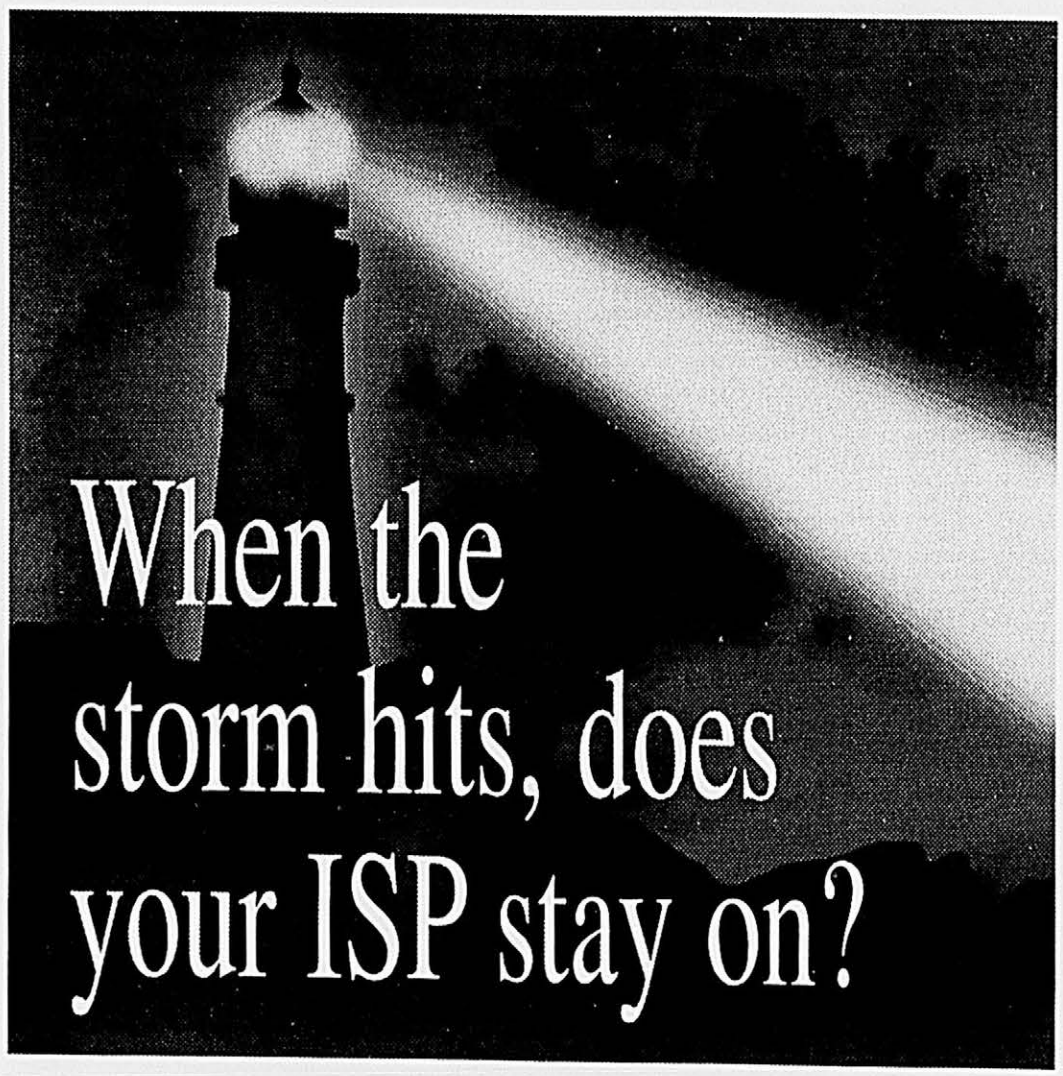

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TicketNoir

An Exposé of Black Exploitation in Advertising

by Alex Halperin

Like many celebrations, Black History Month began with good intentions that have been bastardized. Black History Month is commercialized and also imitated by scarcely observed months or weeks allotted to "Freedom to Read Banned Books" or broccoli. It is refreshing, therefore, to see an informative and interesting exhibit for what has become a dubious observance.

The show is divided into two parts dealing with perceptions, images and stereotypes in Quebecois and French media. The focus here is on advertising, while the second part highlights the art of six Black Montreal artists with roots all over the world.

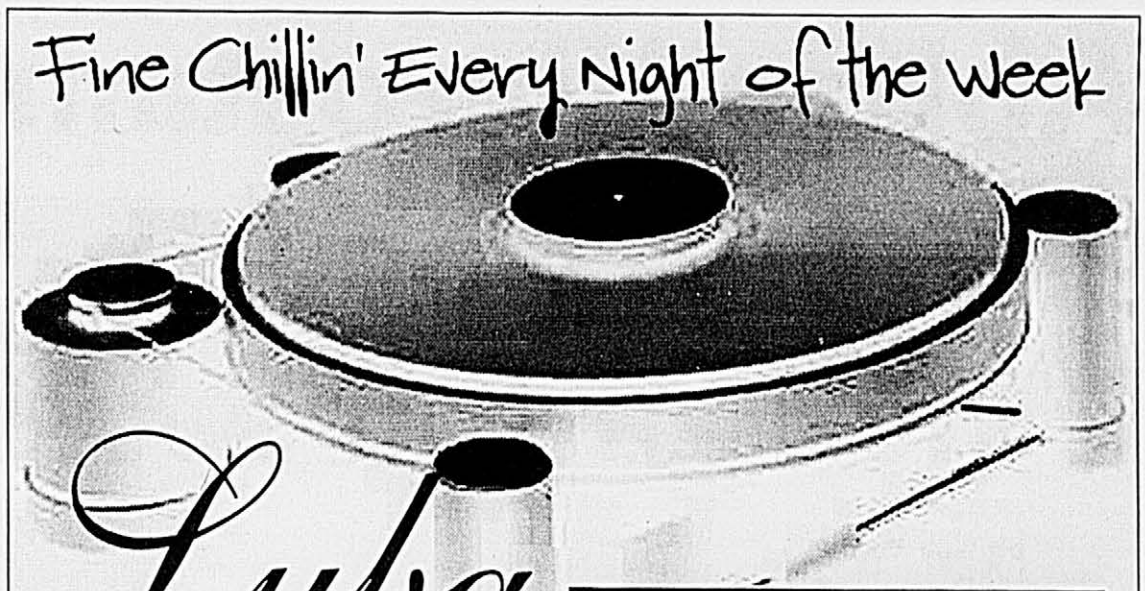
The first, more controversial part of the show concentrates on images of Blacks in French language media over the last hundred years. The images range from the grossest stereotypes to the laughably politically correct. The former was displayed in the French advertisements from the 1890's to 1930's. In ads for rum, toothpaste, the Paris Casino, and chocolate, Blacks were depicted as comical clowns in obvious reference to the minstrel shows of 19th century America. The scarcely dressed figures in the commercials were foolish, thoughtless, and ogling white women. The most outrageous of the ads showed a Black child bowing to an edified child made to look like a Greek god, all thanks to her new foot supports.

Another section of the exhibit displayed a five-stage progression of Blacks in Quebecois advertising since 1971. The first stage included two ads with an innocuous (read pale skinned) black man plugging milk and lottery tickets. It exemplified the great pressure on the Quebec media to include Blacks in advertising, a result of which was a Black image diluted white population. One "politically correct" ad had an absurdly jingoistic ad for a new stamp celebrating the Canadian flag with about a dozen children below it (of all races, creeds, sexes, n'est-ce pas) waving little Canadian flags. The final stages showed progress through having a Black woman on the cover of Elle and a naked Black man back to back with a naked white woman, though it was unclear what, if anything, this was promoting.

The display continued with international ads and pictures. The most grabbing was a United Colors of Benetton ad with a Black woman breast feeding a white baby, another in the series of vapid Benetton ads "designed to get you to think." However, there were two well-conceived pieces: a striking photograph of lounge singer Grace Jones with headlights for eyes, and a lithograph of a white man chewing on a Black man's leg while the black man reciprocates the action. The poster has two lines of writing, appropriately "White Power" and "Black Power."

In the second part of the show, painter Ismaila Manga of Senegal had an impressively bleak series called "Levitation" which portrayed solitary figures with Egyptian and Senegalese symbols incorporated for a powerful effect. Tassoum Doual (Chad) had a more upbeat show using bright colors and images of nature to convey powerful abstract images of man's potential to persevere and triumph against adversity.

Aside from a relentless, though perhaps deserved, tendency to take itself too seriously the exhibit was fascinating. The pamphlet for this show ended with the foreboding "different times, different stereotypes." On my way out, I noticed a more light-hearted message by one



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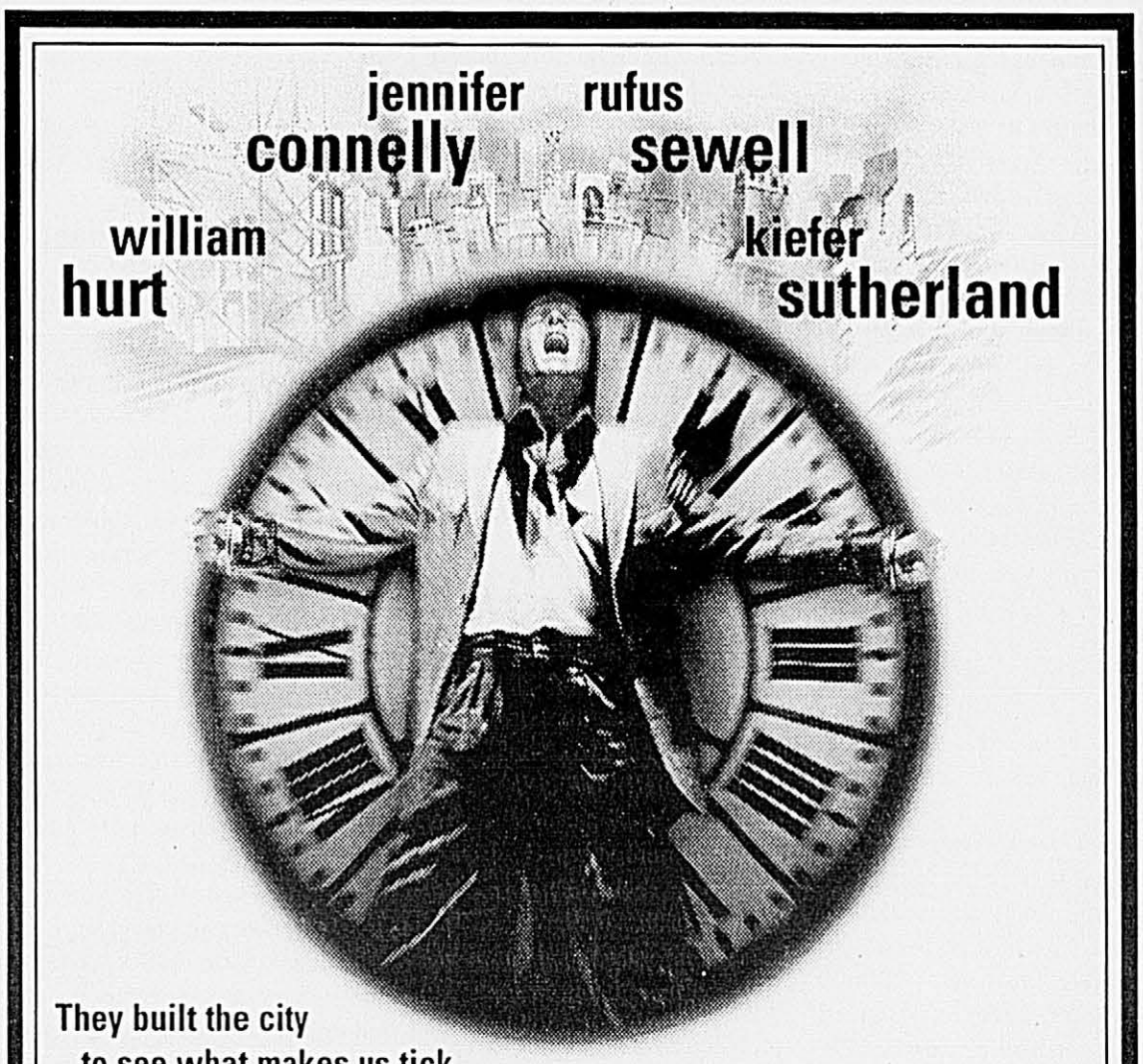


Abbas Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* and the basis of civilization as we know it

by Neil Verma

At an impressionable age, when television was still my favourite parent, I remember seeing a documentary on the nature of human senses. It was one of those informative pieces in which bright eyed gentlemen and token minorities with letters after their names were depicted attesting to novel inconsequentia concerning the nature and development of the language of the senses. I remember little about it, and believed even less, but I vividly recall one of the aforementioned bright eyed gentlemen, an anthropologist no doubt, who explained that the first sensory input which the human fetus receives is the sound of its mother's heartbeat. This fine fellow then proceeded to infer that the heartbeat-sound is nothing less than the basis of civilization as we know it. Rhythm, according to my vaguely recalled television guru, may be the very bedrock of the mind.

That's pretty special, wouldn't you say? All we descendants of fetal matter possess some ineffable memory of our first feeling, a steady beat, endless as water-torture. I guess that's why everybody, regardless of language and ethnicity, can dig a thumpin' P-Funk tune.

Many films have been built around pace. The speed of physical action, the internal rhythm of story events and the sequencing of plot unravellments: these are important malleable elements of the medium. Pace is among the most quiet ways of communicating a narrative; it is a communication to the basis of the senses, presumably, to our very special memory of mommy's ticker. Kurosawa knows that. Coppola knows it too (although sometimes he forgets). Now you do too, if you didn't before.

Taste of Cherry, auteur Abbas Kiarostami's Palme d'Or-legitimated film, *is* pace. This Iranian import tells itself, reveals itself, and challenges the spectator in its cohesive and atmospheric manner of forcing you to watch paint dry. The paint is a glamorless man in a yellowed Range Rover, the drying is his quest to find somebody to bury him. Because after all, this movie is about suicide.

Pace tells the story of Mr. Badii (played by Homayon Ershadi) on an unspecified holiday. For the viewer, Badii becomes a hawkish profile, both literally and figuratively, driving through a rural construction site. The film seems to take place in a temporal space where the sun is always setting. Throughout the slow, grinding hour and 45, the camera sees almost nothing but Badii's expressionless face and the world outside the Range Rover's widow, as it cruises rock dunes over and over, searching for an anonymous after-the-fact collaborator. Badii never betrays any extreme of emotion, his vehicle never a nuance of speed fluctuation, and the landscape never an event of spectacle. I have probably spent more time looking at his profile than my own.

Pace replaces dialogue in evoking the muted ideas conventional to the theme of suicide and specific to its phenomenon within the Koranic tradition of Iran. The monotony of the film, the endless wash of pulverous brown air, perpetual twilight— these are not new motifs to the theme (and films) of hopelessness. Kiarostami is painting loneliness with mise-en-scene, his camera studies isolation by showing billowing dust, the slow swing of far-off cranes, the incessant crunch of rock under tire, as his strange hero performs as calculating automaton. Badii's misery is a figment of his surrounding banalities; his personality is not acted: it is a function of the bleakness around him.

Badii's daily life has a sparse quality, the aspect of simplicity once deified by Horace. Kiarostami is depicting exactly how *you* would look for somebody to bury you. There is hesitancy, there is assessing of character before proposition, there is the offer of money. This is suicide without romance. These are the brass tacks of kicking the bucket, the practical aspect of going gently into that good night.

A paranoid young cadet cannot be persuaded to bury the poor man. A religious student refuses and assaults the stoic Badii with holy argumentation. In the end, it is a pensive taxidermist who's dialogue addresses the most central issues of suicide and who agrees to bury Badii the following morning, if indeed Badii decides to climb into the great equalizer he has dug for himself.

Let me tell you that this film has more tact than seven generations of courtesy-school graduates put together. Everything in the film is slow because it is simple; real because it is plain; drab because it is quiet. Every image is emblematic of the theme, every motion timed in direct correlation to the customary plod of a certain Range Rover that shall remain nameless. The film is as deadly as suicide. This is what it means to make a movie well. When idea relates to image, when every cinematic choice is appropriate to what the film is trying to do- that's well-crafted cinema. And there's a lot you can find in *Taste of Cherry* if you work to find it.

None of which stops me from expressing the following.

I fucking hated this movie. I have never had a more mind-numbing cinematic experience in my entire life, and I wouldn't inflict it on Stalin. I hate it even more because I have to admit that it is executed with great competence. For me, snail pace isn't sweet, it is excruciating. No matter how well-syncopated the rhythms of action, there are limits to how sedately a film that moves about as fast as geology ought to be received. It saddens me to think that there are unborn film students who may be required to endure 2 hours of an Iranian man driving on a dirt road. But I guess artists have to suffer.

See this movie if you want to see something well-constructed. Walk out (like five people did last night), because you'll get bored. Perhaps my dear mother had a faster heart than most, perhaps my fundamental rhythmic first feeling was too speedy, because my pop-culture inculcated mind cannot tolerate such a deliberately arduous film. I was very, very bored, and I'm not scared to admit it. I think that most people will hate this film, but it is important to recognize that it is nevertheless an excellent one.

In order for my concept of normative pace to be plodding enough for me to truly appreciate *Taste of Cherry*, I would have been gestated in the womb of a corpse.

A Taste of Cherry *is playing at Parc Cinema until March 5.*

Of time and the frozen sea

Rickman breaks the ice with *The Winter Guest*

by Zha-Zha Plandowski

Alan Rickman, well known for out-acting Kevin Costner in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, but also a distinguished performer in British cinema, gives an outstanding directorial debut in *The Winter Guest*. Rickman takes us through a frigid day on a Scottish seaside town where eight people are juxtaposed on a backdrop of a frozen sea. Cool greys and blues set in spacious, seemingly eternal landscapes set the mood for this introspective and philosophical piece.

Emma Thompson plays Frances, a recently widowed photographer who spends the day with her unwelcome mother, Elspeth, played by Thompson's mother, Phyllida Law. The sharp tongued, spiteful dialogue between Frances and Elspeth is intermingled with the playful spiritedness of their relationship. Elspeth, never slow to give a truthful opinion, even of her deceased son-in-law, is an interesting contrast to her daughter's emotional introversion. Rickman develops this along with France's and Elspeth's numbing loneliness, which prevents them, until the end of the day, from realizing that their future well-being is dependent on the friendship and support they can give one another.

Frances's son Alex (Gary Hollywood), meanwhile, is caught off guard by a brash new girl. Unwittingly hypnotized by the strong will and sexual confidence of Nita (Arlene Cockburn), he invites her to his empty home for his first sexual encounter. The immediate emotional intimacy they allow one another illuminates Alex's emotional and sexual rigidity. The picture shrine to Alex's father and his mother's emotional distancing has confined him to the same loneliness which Frances has imposed upon herself.

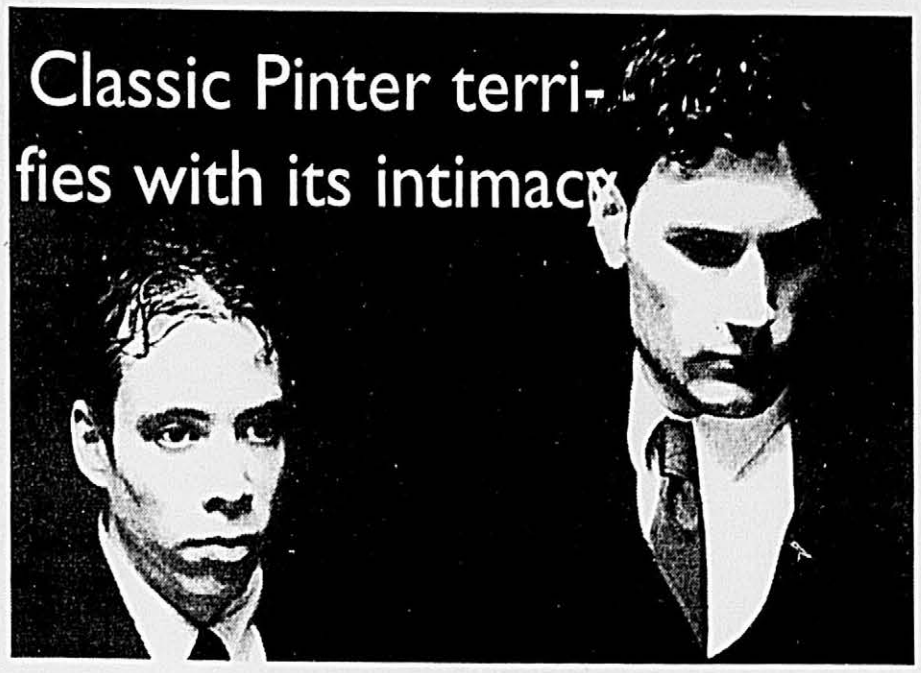
Meanwhile, Lily (Sheila Reid) and Chloe (Sandra Voe) are another pair of villagers who schedule their weeks by reading the obituary page and attending the funerals they find there. Seemingly infatuated with death, Lily and Chloe are nevertheless represented as life's romantics, moved by the simple blowing out of a candle or the erotic thrill of French vanilla cake.

Sam (Douglas Murphy) and Tom (Sean Biggerstaff), two pubescent boys playing hooky for the day, exchange their philosophies on life while discovering the mysteries of a frozen shore. Their exchanges range from the consuming desire for larger genitals to the insightful questioning into society and parental expectations. The youthful reflections of the two boys is used to narrate the philosophies subtly intermingled with the events taking place with the other six villagers. Love, emotional sterility, infatuation, loneliness, and joy are analyzed in the youthful speculation of what the future holds.

As Sam and Tom are steeped in contemplation, Rickman allows the frozen sea to frame their discourse. This cold, lonely landscape has ensconced the meaning and importance of the characters' words and actions in time. Each pair of characters illuminates the meaning of their relationships through conversations, the similarity of their dialogues masked only by the differences in generations, and Rickman maintains the momentum of the stories and characters. The movie's themes are unconsciously muddled with the scenery and the dialogue is as fresh as the air blowing off an ocean. Moving, awing, and simply beautiful.

The Winter Guest *is playing at Cinema du Parc.*

Talking in emptiness



by Kim Valenta

"Have you seen the play then?"
"What?"
"I thought you said..."
"No."
"Are you sure...?"
"What?"
"That you haven't..."
"That I haven't what, for Christ's sake, "
"Oh."
"Oh. Oh what?"
"I was just wondering whether or not you saw it..."
"I answered you, didn't I?"
"Yes, I suppose..."
"You suppose?"
"I don't remember."
"Isn't that fine..."
"No...no. At least I don't think so."
"Don't think."
"Don't think?"
"No."
"Alright.... I suppose."
"And stop supposing."
"Why?"
"What?
"I asked why?"
"Why what?"
"I forget."
"Good."
"How is that good?"
"Eh?"
"Forgetting. Why is forgetting good?"
"I don't remember..."
"It's by Pinter, isn't it?"
"What?"
"The play. It's by Pinter."
"Yes."
"Then you saw it.."
"The play?"
"Yes, the play. You saw the play and the play is by Pinter."
"Harold.."
"Yes, Harold.."
"Harold Pinter!"
"Stop yelling.."
"But it's wonderful."
"What?
"Well, *it*..."
"The play?"
"Yes! The play, the play..."
"I didn't see the play."
"You didn't see the?"
"No."
"But I..."
"No."
"Oh."
"Exactly."
"What. What did you do instead?"

Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*.

Three flights up some very steep stairs there is a tiny performance space, black walls and benches, Ben and Gus and tension.

In this space, at this time is *The Dumb Waiter*, an absurd and terrifying hour of theater, starring Kent McQuaid and Jesse Todd.

Kent McQuaid plays the violent and impatient Ben. Todd plays his partner Gus, an oblivious and persistently anxious sidekick. The relationship that these two actors create is reminiscent of Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, of Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon.

The play itself is classic Pinter. Kind of eerie, mostly crazy, very surreal, and entirely, wonderfully, perfectly absurd. It takes place in a dark and windowless room, bare but for two cots, a speaking tube, and a picture of anonymous horsemen.

When the House opens the actors are already on stage, quietly reclining on their respective cots. One is asleep, the other is reading, and it is wonderful to simply observe this lightness, the fetal characterization that comes with the faces and the slight, natural movements of page-turning, and sleep-twitching. It is uncomfortable for a while to be so physically close to the hardly-acting actors, especially to see their repose, as if they might do something so horribly private at any moment, oblivious to the presence of the audience as they seem.

It is hard to resist getting involved in *The Dumb Waiter*, due to the physical closeness of actors and audience, the intimately small space, the informal seating and the fabulous job the actors do. And once you are in, you are subjected to terror and tension.

In short, this play is definitely worth seeing. It is worth the lung-numbing climb up too-steep stairs, and the five dollar suggested donation. If midterms are getting to be too much, and you're not getting a trip to Florida like everyone else, treat yourself to this play. Aw heck, treat yourself to this play anyway.

For advance tickets call 987-1774. 3964 St. Laurent. February 19th-February 22nd. Thursday thru Saturday evenings at 8 P.M. and Sunday afternoon at 2 P.M.

The other side of conflict

Colonialism and the Gustafsen Lake Crisis

by Jamie McGowan

The ongoing colonial subjugation of native peoples by the Canadian government and the existence of political prisoners was exposed to about 85 Montrealers last Saturday, at Concordia University by fiery speaker and long-time native rights militant Dacajewiah (Splitting the Sky).

The event titled "Colonialism in Canada: the Gustafsen Lake Crisis" was part of a seven city speaking tour organised by the Anti-Colonial Action Alliance, a national network of mostly non-native organisations that supports First Nations sovereignty. Local sponsors and organisers included the Anarchist Black Cross, Criminal Injustice (McGill QPIRG), the First Nations Solidarity working group (Concordia QPIRG), the Regroupement de solidarite avec les Autochtones, and CKUT.

Dacajewiah, the national spokesperson for the Free the Wolverine Campaign was a participant in the 1995 armed stand-off at Gustafsen Lake (Ts'peten), British Columbia between 20 native sundancers and 400 RCMP officers. For the first time, Montrealers were able to hear a firsthand account from the other side of the conflict now known as the "Gustafsen Lake Crisis," rather than the racist coverage, orchestrated by the RCMP at the time of the stand-off.

According to Dacajewiah, the site of the conflict had been used for several years for a spiritual ceremony known as the sundance. The conflict started in June 1995, when participants erected a fence around the sundance grounds to keep out cows who were disturbing the sacred grounds. Shortly after, rancher Lyle James who claimed title to the land, sent in a dozen cowhands armed with guns into the sundancers' encampment threatening to "string up some red niggers." The sundancers responded that the disputed land was in fact native land, and that James illegally and fraudulently acquired title to the land. The sundancers, fearing possible assaults in an area with active KKK and neo-nazi militias armed themselves for protection. Numerous exchanges of gunshots occurred over the next several weeks, between sundancers and local rednecks trying to terrorise and evict the sundancers.

Police negotiators then intervened and a temporary cease-fire occurred. This cease-fire was soon broken when 400 para-military RCMP officers surrounded the sundancers camp and laid siege to it for the next month, in what became the largest RCMP operation in Canadian history.

The sundancers claimed the police had no jurisdiction on native land, and the police were violating the sovereignty of the Shuswap Nation. A massive smear and misinformation campaign was then organised by the RCMP, labeling the native sovereignists as "terrorists" to justify its massive military buildup and legitimize the attempted assassination of the "hardliners", according to Dacajewiah. Food, communication, and water to the camp was cut off, and tanks were loaned by the Canadian Army.

Dacajewiah went on to explain one of the major incidents where a native youth, James Pitawanakwat, and a non-native woman, Sunviya Bronson drove over a RCMP land mine, blowing up their truck and almost killing them. They then fled the vehicle and area pursued by an Armored Personnel Carrier, and gunfire from snipers. The tanks' wheels were shot out by one of the sundancers hiding in the forest, William Jones Ignace, also known as Wolverine.

In the year long criminal trial that followed Wolverine received an eight and a half year sentence. Both he and James Pitawanakwat remain imprisoned as a result and take the position of being prisoners of war. Their recent appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada claiming that Canada has no jurisdiction on unceded native was rejected.

For more information on the Gustafsen Lake Crisis, or how to support the two political prisoners, Wolverine and James Pitawanakwat and the Free the Wolverine Campaign contact the First Nations Solidarity working group at the Public Interest Research Group at Concordia at 848-7585.

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Courageous *Feminine* Power

by Randolph-Dalton Hyman

One day, while searching I read an epic entitled *The Lords Club*. According to the tale, this club had a rule that only lords were admitted to the premises. Upon another day of searching, I visited the Saidye Bronfman Theater. To my surprise, I discovered another club, the "House of Pride," with a similar club rule: only Goddesses, or drag queens, with personal problems are admitted. Personal dramas provide the foundation for the House of Pride's House Opera. Glory to personal life dramas!

I do feel like I'm not the typical man [laughs] and I don't want to be anyway. I know I don't fit in with those people. I don't want to be like them and they don't want to be like me anyway. Even with other drag queens I don't relate to them
- Joffrey Frigid

Orgasm for me is more like, ahhhhh let go and ahhhhh enjoy. Performing for me is about letting go and enjoying. Sometimes it is, but it's too demanding.
- Joffrey Frigid

drag queen drama

Jacques Besner is unhappy with his "jetish" weight; Garth Johnston is struggling with being the only "nigger" in the club, though he has overcome the memory of a childhood rape; Kiet HaVanAnh would be happier soaring high above the Himalayans. Remember the story about the little caboose that did? Maybe more engine power is needed to destroy Kiet's "overweight Asian freak" syndrome.

The only "real" Ms. in the club is Martha Carter. Striving for superstardom maternal credentials Martha habitually roams Gay villages in search of boy-chicks. Wake up Gay men of all kinds, for the waves of feminine power is surging towards the *Sky*. If you are willing to let mama Carter read stories to you about Goddesses and feminine power, you could be allowed entrance to mama Martha Carter's boy-chick club.

Upon another search I questioned Joffrey Dumas, the club's most beloved member. He calls himself Joffrey Frigid, and FRIGID he is not on stage. Joffrey's raw dance energy leaves some viewers panting for more of his provoking sexual presence.

Who is this ninety pound twirling dancer blazing out of control? Man, woman, god, goddess Gay, straight? Only Joffrey could clarify this confusion. With only thirty minutes to spare another journalist's inquisition no deep probing was admitted. Just time for direct questions and answers.

30 minutes uninterrupted with Joffrey Dumas.

Daily: What is your personal philosophy?

Frigid: Ah, always be true to myself. I believe all the answers are inside of us, that's why I don't believe in religion and all that. They try to make people in a group, but sometimes you have to let go of something you will do if you were not in this group and I'm not in that. I'm into trying to be true to myself without hurting anyone, that, is for sure.

Daily: Do you give up anything to be in House of Pride?

Frigid: Oh no, not at all. The goal of House of Pride is to take what's best of each other and to make something good instead of all trying to give the same thing. We construct the show ourselves so we know what's good for some people and not for others. We don't try to, like, to give somebody something that they don't feel good in. We push each other too a little bit though, to go further in what they do best.

Daily: Was that real marijuana on stage?

Frigid: No. I don't think it was (big laugh).

Daily: Where did House of Pride come from?

Frigid: In the clubs mostly with Martha Carter, the company director, and Stephen. They were looking for other dancers and stuff like that. They were not expecting to find people like us. All of our goals really transformed the House of Pride. The name came from Kiet for the World Ball, and we kept that name 'cause we loved it.

Daily: Is there a motto for House of Pride?

Frigid: It's all about diversity and being who you are and being proud, that's why it's House of Pride.

Daily: Spiritual influences are very conscious, for example, the lotus bath, the choice of costumes, and you talk of feminine power. Which spiritual philosophy is this all about?

Frigid: We're not talking about God. Before God there were Goddesses. We believe in "feminine power." We call that scene Goddess and we made it be fluffy, but at the same time we say that's what we

"I feel woman, but I am also man."

think. And we said if that's the past, but it's also what we are living right now, us as individuals. We like the Goddesses.

Daily: Who does the choreography?

Frigid: Ah, mostly all of us for the big dance parts. For myself, I have a little moment of improv (blissful smile) 'cause I like to feel the moment and give it all away. For sure I have more dance technique. Martha too has more of an idea where people should go on stage and all that. I guess mostly Martha and me.

Daily: Martha Carter is criticized for not fitting in the group. How did she become such a powerful and key figure in this drag company?

Frigid: She's the only "real" woman in the show. It's kind of weird 'cause a year ago she wasn't even like performing with us, she didn't want to perform, and then, we thought well, she has a great voice and a good body. I think that if we would be only drag queens people would have more prejudice about us. Because she is a woman people are like, "Oh my God, she's a real woman?" But, people try to separate her from us because she is a woman, but I feel we're just a whole.

Daily: Sex is pervasive in House Opera; comment on that?

Frigid: Sex is in the show because it's not in our lives. [Laughing] Oh yeah, my God. Maybe that's why we feel like exploring this side of us on stage because we don't explore it that much in private, we wish we would [big laugh]. But there is nothing wrong with that. Yes there is a lot of sex in the show, I don't think it's something bad. That's the club side of sex too, It's really raw. Of course it's a bit more extreme 'cause it's a show, but it is like that. Gay people could say, ah it's prejudice. In straight clubs too it is sexual energy and primal. In Gay clubs it's even more.

Daily: Is performing orgasmic for you?

Frigid: Not really. I'm too much in control when I'm performing. I'm not like tripping like, oh wow! I'm really conscious of everything happening around me. Orgasm for me is more like, ahhhhh let go and ahhhhh enjoy. Performing for me is about letting go and enjoying. Sometimes it is, but it's too demanding.

Daily: Are you perpetuating the myth that Gay men only love to dress up in women's garments and have 'primal' sex?

Frigid: No, I don't think so. The show is about being different. I think we're sending out a beautiful message.

Daily: I read a quote recently that said, "I believe the greatest morality is to acknowledge freedom of others to be oneself, and to not be in judgment of others who are different from you." Do you feel different from most guys?

Frigid: For me the word different should not even exist cause what's not different, we're all different. I do feel like I'm not the typical man [laughs] and I don't want to be anyway. I know I don't fit in with those people. I don't want to be like them and they don't want to be like me anyway. Even with other drag queens I don't relate to them, like RuPaul. Yeah I feel different.

Daily: When did you start being comfortable as an "actress?"

Frigid: I have a video of myself they are suppose to show at the end of the show. I'm eight years old and I'm dressed and make-upped and its my father who video it and my mother put the makeup on me and I'm doing a lip-synch. I always liked looking more feminine. The only thing I wasn't comfortable with is people knowing. I'm just expressing who I am. I feel woman, but I am also man.

Daily: Do you see drag as a phase in your life?

Frigid: Yes and no. I always like to play with myself. I am always going to wear lingerie. Oh yeah, I love that, that's my fetish.

Daily: Where are you going with House of Pride?

Frigid: I like the idea of going to Broadway. I could see that happening. I would like to do an album and we're ready to tour this show a little bit more to go deeper into it.

Daily: What is your dream?

Frigid: It's London for House of Pride, but for me I want to have a band and I want to do rock and roll [big laugh] EVERYWHERE. London is intense. All kinds of people there and the music I like most come from there and a lot of good influences are coming from there too. It might be in ten years, but I want to have a band with the same relationship I have with House of Pride, but with musicians.

Daily: There is a philosophy that says we are all God and can achieve anything we want to. Do you consider yourself God?

Frigid: Yes, but, ah. We can all be our own god. It's not something I think about. I don't worship myself. I'm always working at something. I'm a small god.

Daily: Who are you?

Frigid: [Long pause] That's a hard question. I'm just someone trying to find a balance between everything I am and I don't know really what I am. I said in my song I never wanted to be a woman but I've never been a man. For me I am a boy physically, but mentally I am questioning what's a man and what's a woman. Who gave the definition for a man and a woman anyway. I have no definition for myself.

Daily: With great love, and deep respect, thank you Joffrey.

DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

McGill University invites nominations and applications for the position of Dean of the Faculty of Education. The appointment will be for a renewable five-year term commencing July 1, 1998.

Candidates must have appropriate scholarly and administrative experience, with proven leadership abilities; they must be able to liaise with the Ministry of Education and the educational milieu. Ability to communicate in French is an asset.

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house opera speaks of ancient india and personal journeys

the Bagh-e-Iram of montreal pay thematic homage to the Indian culture of feminine and goddess power

by salman m. husain

The musical ***House Opera*** explores "feminine power" and "goddess power", in most part through undergoing nominal gender transformations and by taking the audience on personal journeys. Feminine and goddess powers, which even modern-day psychologists now recognise as sexual dualism, comes from ancient traditions of India and is found in the Kama Sutra, the *hijra* community and the Muslim culture of the Mughals and the Sufis.

kama sutra, hijrah community & mughals/sufis

Indian mythology recognises and deifies the male and female principles within the human body through its representation of Lord Siva. Siva is *andanari*; meaning he is half woman. Only by connecting with his feminine energy is he able to have power. Tantric literatures also describe the combining Siva & Shakti within a body. It is believed that *kundalini* - power of enlightenment - can be awakened by the ritual of anal penetration. This ritual can elevate the symbolic value of the power of enlightenment within individuals, giving them godlike powers. Kama Sutra, the first literary classic in the world on the matters of sex written in the 4th Century A.D., describes drag queens in the chapter of gay sex *auparishtaka*. "...disguised ... as females imitate their dress, speech, gestures, tenderness, timidity, simplicity, softness and bashfulness..."

Arvid Kumar writes in his essay "Hijras: Challenging gender dichotomies", in the anthology *A Lotus of Another Color, Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience*, that the *hijra* community lives in small clusters and each has a kinship hierarchy. Each cluster has a guru and her disciples, and each guru has a guru. The disciples refer to each other as "sister" and the guru is "mother": "...the *hijras* will dance and sing, tease the onlookers, and bestow blessings of good health and fertility." Kama Sutra & the *hijra* community give us a glimpse of the first documentation of the origins of drag. A little later in time homoerotic literature on male/female gender issues was being written. Writers were starting to describe gay love in Arabic and Persian prose/poetry. According to John Boswell, in Christianity, *Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, this was the influence of Sufi literature on homosexual eroticism, being a major metaphorical expression of spiritual relationship between god and humans. The origins in ancient India come together with the refinement and fabulousness of the sexually decadent Mughal culture. In sixteenth century India, drag queens and drag shows came together into an opulent literary scene known as *Mahfils*/shows. These *Mahfils*/drag-shows were where gays & lesbians got together to recite poetry, and sing and dance in Urdu and Persian. This combination included a performance called *mujrah* . *Mujrah* is a sultry, seductive dance full of sexual suggestions. The male dancers, who were in *mahfils* had stage names in feminine gender, even though *mujrah* is still performed with *tang*-pyjama and see-through *angharkah*-frock with jewellery and make-up, but nowadays it's more prevalent and popular with female, (i.e. biological female), dancers. *Muraqqa-e-Delhi: The Mughal Capital in Mohammad Shah's Time (1739-41)* , was translated in English by C. Shekhar and S. Chenoy speaks of these *mahfils* of Mirza Munnu at his palace of Shadad to Bagh-e-Iram and nawab palaces/Mughal Courts.

Sexual duality comes from ancient India, the Harlem house-style kinship hierarchy - the calling of "sister" comes from the *hijra* community of ancient India and the fabo. attire, attitude, rich and often personal poetry/storytelling comes from the opulence of Mughals and the spirituality of the Sufi Muslim culture of India. This historical existence and development of drag, drag queens and drag shows flooded back to me as I sat watching the *mahfil House Opera*. The similarities not only in the content but also in terms of venue became evident in my mind's eye — drag queens / *hijras*, drag shows / *mahfils*, Saidye Bronfman Centre / Bagh-e-Iram.

strong performances carried the show

House of Pride is a musical theatre group that evolved out of drag shows in the gay clubs. Styling, costuming and lip-synch-ing, which are prevalent of the Harlem house-style drag shows, have merged with the theatrical movements, routines and not lip-synch-ing in House Opera, the first feature-length theatrical performance of House of Pride. It explores nominal gender transformations in the form of drag and not radical gender transformations in the form of surgery. Thematically, it's paying homage to ancient India, but I doubt if the audience realized the full scope perspectivally. Drag and its developments are so much in the deep recesses our mind that I wonder if the historical perspective was realized completely. But, it was quite evident to me in the references made to ancient India during the performance and in the story that is built around the female and goddess powers. The other story in the show is of a "evolution," it goes beyond reclaiming the feminine and self-questioning in personal poem/storytelling of the fantastic journey into more "nature" and the North American defiance of societal pressures and the forming of individualized identity.

Six talented performers, who form the **House of Pride**, took to stage a very long (two hour) journey in *House Opera* at the Saidye Bronfman Centre. The show was carried by the strong performances of **Gartina J** (Garth Johnston); **Joffrey Frigid** (Joffrey Dumas); and **Jacklyn Jet** (Jacques Besner). They created quite a buzz and the audience clapped and howled praises accordingly. It was a good idea to start and end the show with Gartina. Her performance was strong, fearless and on the mark. Joffrey dazed and dazzled the crowd with her perfect execution of her interdisciplinary dance moves in such speed that at times he was just a blur. I was quite struck with her symbolic expressionism through dance. There was a point during which, instead of recounting her personal story, she expressed emotion through footwork and not speech, like a traditional flamenco dancer. Jacklyn is a sheer delight to see as a goddess awakening and stepping out of her shell (actual giant shell) and telling it like it is while teasing a Voyeur.

In terms of storytelling, Act One was superfluous, despite certain interesting passages, like the "Gospel" and the song "Sex Panic" with its way too excessive use of pussy/penis-power words (its composition and choreography is worth mentioning). My understanding is this: the only way it can be justified is as an introduction to the House of Pride. As a Montrealer, it is hard to miss the space that the House covered within the domain of the Queer-club culture. But if you were watching the show *House Opera* as your first performance of the House, then Act One works as an introduction and it attempts to put a humanity behind the characters. The main show, in my opinion, was the Act Two, where the goddess (played by Jacklyn) awakens to find a voyeur (played by [Steven] LaRaine [Hues]). The choreography, lyrics, lights and the message in this scene came together perfectly and clearly. Jacklyn not only worked flawlessly with her routine but the costume enhanced the overall feeling of the show. The scene is the show; drawing us in, like the voyeur, so enchanted by the encounter with the goddess.

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Ads may be placed through the Daily Business Office, Room B-07, University Centre, 9h00-14h00. Deadline is 14h00, two working days prior to publication. McGill Students & Staff (with valid ID): $4.65 per day, 3 or more consecutive days, $4.10 per day. General Public: $5.90 per day, or $4.95 per day for 3 or more consecutive days. Extra charges may apply, prices include applicable GST or PST. Full payment should accompany your advertising order and may be made in cash or by personal cheque (for amounts over $20 only). For more information, please visit our office or call 398-6790. WE CANNOT TAKE CLASSIFIED ADS OVER THE PHONE. PLEASE CHECK YOUR AD CAREFULLY WHEN IT APPEARS IN THE PAPER. The Daily assumes no financial responsibility for errors, or damages due to errors. Ad will re-appear free of charge upon request if information is incorrect due to our error. The Daily reserves the right not to print any classified ad.

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THE DAILY

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Recruiting McGill students from all faculties to participate in study on Canadian TV news. No background required. Must be available March 14th-15th, 1998. Pay is $8 per hour. Please contact Julia at 398-4805 or e-mail jguha@po-box.mcgill.ca

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2nd Lecture:
Life with Dignity:
Bio-Ethical Decisions for A Life Threatening Illness.

Thursday, March 5, 1998
7:15 p.m.

Cummings House,
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Guest Lecturer:
Dr. Fred Rosner, Director
Department of Medicine,
Queen Hospital Center,
Jamaica, New York

Refreshments will be served

For Further Information, please call Galit at **345-2606**

Celebrating 80 years of Community Service

PGSS
The Post Graduate Students' Society

Annual General Meeting
Wednesday, March 4, 1998
6:00 p.m.
Thomson House, 3650 McTavish Street
A light meal will be served

Meet the Election Candidates
Discuss Referenda Questions
5:00 p.m.

The Agenda of the Annual General Meeting will include:
*Resolutions pertaining to Constitutional Amendments
End-of-year Reports of the PGSS Executive
Question Period
.....
Council Meeting will follow at 6:30 p.m.

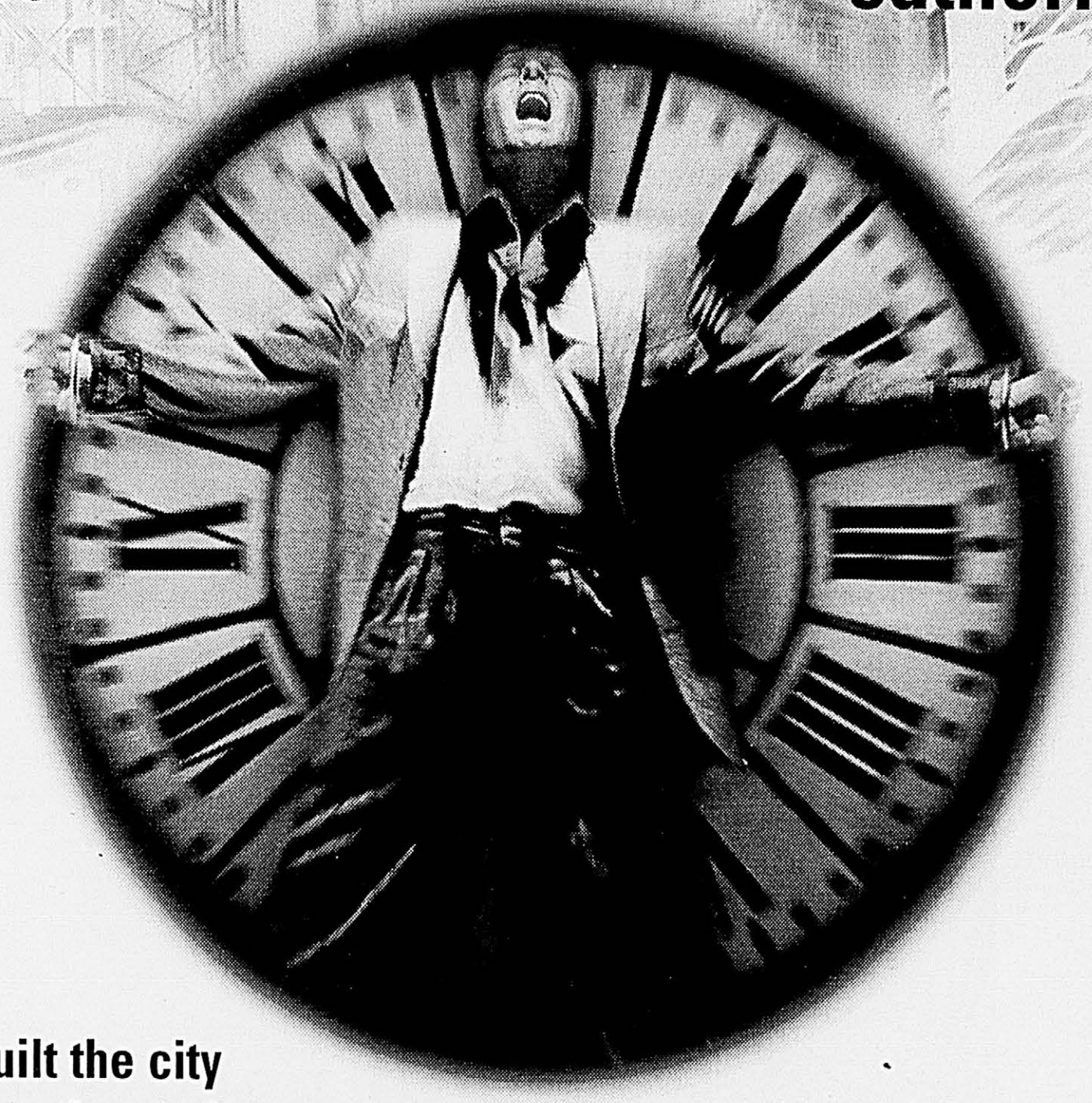
*The text of the current constitution and the proposed revisions are available at Thomson House
398-3756
and on our web site:
http://www.mcgill.ca/pgss

jennifer connelly

rufus sewell

william hurt

kiefer sutherland



They built the city
to see what makes us tick.
Last night one of us went off.

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PRODUCTION DESIGNER patrick tatopoulos DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY dariusz wolski,a.s.c. LINE PRODUCER barbara gibbs
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS michael de luca AND brian witten PRODUCED BY andrew mason AND alex proyas STORY BY alex proyas
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